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ABSTRACT

The theme of this special journal issue is diagnostic reading instruction. The first of two main articles discuss ways to teach reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive way and the second deals with how to select a reading instruction approach for the mainstreamed child. Regular journal features discuss research on assessing readers' strategies through miscues, relevant research on the administration of reading programs, ways to use board games as diagnostic instruments in the classroom, and a diagnostic primer for parents. The issue journal also contains notes from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on future directions in education and a guest editorial. (RL)

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President's Message

Dear Friends in Reading:

Ever wonder what the WSRA President thinks about on January 30? Is spring ever coming? Will children ever read up to their potential? Does the amount of background a teacher has in reading really not make any difference in student achievement as shown in a recent Philadelphia study? Are you going to attend the Spring Convention? Will the WSRA budget balance at the end of the Year? Who will be the editor of the WSRA Journal next year? Who will be the new officers of WSRA? Will we ever get the fiscal state support for the Reading Specialist position that LD/ED teachers have? When will we get a usable diagnostic instrument that will tell us what reading approach; i.e., synthetic or analytic phonics, to use with each first grade student in order to assure success? Will we have a snow storm the day the Board of Directors is supposed to meet? Will I get this President's Message to Sue Jund in time? (Any reliable answers to the above questions would be appreciated.)

Mel Yanow, our Vice President, is busily putting together our Spring Convention which will be held April 17-19 at the Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc. I surely hope you all will make a special effort to attend and also to bring other teachers with you. Once they see what we have to offer, many will join our organization.

By moving the convention to Oconomowoc we hope to overcome the problems that arose last year. There were two main problems: 1. There weren't enough hotel rooms; and 2. Many people couldn't attend the sessions they wanted. The Olympia has many more rooms available and everyone should be able to stay there and I believe the meeting rooms are larger, also. Now all we need is YOU! C'mon over and get yourself stimulated and renewed! As an added bonus, use of the spa is free! Leave it to Mel Yanow to make sure that both mind and body are rejuvenated!

Dave Gustafson
President

A MESSAGE FROM IRA'S STATE COORDINATOR

Winter, 1980

To All WSRA Members,

I have had the pleasure of visiting several local Councils this year. I would like to congratulate you for the very innovative and exciting work that you are doing. By the time this Journal is printed I expect that we will be processing a request to establish a new local Council in the extreme North-East portion of our state.

The Northwestern Council and The South Kettle Moraine Council are celebrating their 10th anniversaries this year. The Platteville Area Council is completing its 20th year. I will present Recognition Awards to the leadership of these three Councils at our meeting in Oconomowoc. I wish that every member of WSRA could be present for the fine program which Mel Yanow and his people have prepared for us. We are in the initial stages of requesting the privilege of hosting the 1984 Great Lakes Regional Conference in Wisconsin. I will keep you informed about developments.

As you know, the 25th Anniversary Program of IRA will be held May 5-9 in St. Louis. I hope many of you will pool resources so that Wisconsin may be well represented there.

Mrs. Pat Bricker, a staunch leader of WSRA these many years, is recuperating at the University Hospital in Madison at this writing. I'm sure Pat would be happy to hear from you.

Mr. Ed Sauer, husband of Past President Jane Sauer, died in Wausau in January. Ed was as helpful and supportive of WSRA as any member could be. Our deepest condolences go to Jane and her family.

Dr. Lester Van Gilder, a former President of WSRA, and Professor of Reading at Marquette University, is seriously ill. Les now lives in Blowing Rock, North Carolina. I am sure he would be happy to hear from his many friends in Wisconsin.

Final plans for our World Reading Congress Tour have been completed. We will leave Minneapolis July 23 and will visit Honolulu, Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Tokoyo with the main feature visit at Manila for the IRA World Congress Program. This 20 day adventure will end August 11 when we fly back to Minneapolis. As you know, this is available as a 2 credit reading seminar for those who are interested in making the trip tax deductible. Please write or call me immediately if you are interested in receiving a brochure.

Once again, I look forward to seeing all of you in Oconomowoc.

Sincerely,

Dr. Roger Quealy
IRA State Coordinator

Diagnosis and Prescription: It's Really Not Impossible

by

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Reprinted from
Reporting on Reading
September, 1979 Vol. 5 No. 6

For a number of years, teachers have been urged to teach reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive way. But this is not always easy to do. Many teachers find that large classes and a growing number of other responsibilities make teaching reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive way very difficult. However, there are some techniques that can help.

What is Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teaching of Reading?

In the past, a student was expected to be able to read what most of the other students in his or her grade could read. All students were supposed to work on all of the reading skills selected for their grade whether or not they had already mastered them. Good readers never were encouraged to read challenging materials, while many below average readers spent their entire school career reading materials that were too difficult simply because they were the materials designed for that grade.

Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching of reading should alter some of these practices.

Reading at an Appropriate Level

Allowing a student to read on an appropriate level is one of the easiest yet most effective ways of teaching reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive manner.

A student should read for pleasure on the independent reading level, the point at which he or she can recognize words with 99 percent accuracy and at which he or she has 95 percent or better comprehension. A student should read for information on the instructional level. I define this level as the point at which a student can recognize words with about 90 percent or better accuracy and at which he or she has 75 percent or better comprehension.

It is not very difficult for you to determine a student's approximate instructional and independent reading levels. Have the student read aloud to you privately from a series of graded reading materials. Then note the number of errors the student makes while reading a short passage from each. After the student has finished reading each passage aloud, ask a few questions to find out how well the passages were understood.

An alternative way to determine a studnet's approximate instructional and independent reading levels is to use a commercial individual reading inventory or to use the one that accompanies your basal series. Remember that all such published devices indicate only approximate reading levels and that their results should be interpreted cautiously.

The cloze procedure is yet another way of determining a student's approximate reading level. Select a passage of about 250 words and type the first and last sentences. Then, except for proper nouns, in all other sentences delete every eighth word at the primary-grade level and every fifth word at the middle-upper level. Have the student complete the cloze procedure without help.

Here is how to evaluate a cloze procedure:

Count the number of blanks in the passage.

Count the number of blanks correctly filled with the exact word that was omitted.

Divide to obtain the percentage of blanks correctly filled.

If a student has correctly filled about 45 percent of the blanks, the material probably is on the instructional reading level.

If the student has correctly filled about 60 percent or more of the blanks, the material probably is on the independent reading level.

You can also use the maze technique to help determine a student's instructional and independent reading levels. Construct a maze technique from a passage of about 120 words. Replace every fifth word in the passage with a multiple choice. One alternative should be the correct word, another an incorrect word which is the same part of speech, and a third an incorrect word and another part of speech. Although the following percentages are very tentative at this time, a score of 60 to 70 percent of the words correct may indicate the instructional reading level, and 80 percent or more of the words correct may indicate the independent reading level.

Assessing Competence, Teaching Skills

Another important element of teaching reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive manner is determining a student's specific reading skill competencies and weaknesses. As much as possible, students should not have to work on reading skills they have already mastered.

There are several ways of finding out what a student already knows or still needs to learn. One way is to use criterion-referenced or mastery tests--tests that evaluate a student's performance in some specific reading skill. For example, you and your colleagues could write test items to assess a student's competency in any one or several of these phonic skills: long vowel sounds, short vowel sounds, consonant blends, consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs, dipthongs, phonograms, or useful phonic generalizations. Any of these reading skills not mastered by several students could then be presented and/or reinforced by using any of a multitude of commercial or teacher-made materials, games, or devices. Remember, though, each student should work on only those reading skills in which he or she lacks competence.

As an alternative to making your own tests and devising your own materials, you can use a commercial diagnostic-prescriptive reading program. Such programs normally contain placement tests, criterion-referenced tests, and a listing of appropriate commercial materials that can be used to present and/or reinforce the reading skills a student needs to master. Although many such programs have been criticized because they fragment reading skills and may have a time-consuming record-keeping system, they do enable a teacher to present reading instruction in a diagnostic-prescriptive manner.

Criterion-referenced tests and commercial programs are not your only options, though. Reading diagnosis and prescription can be done more informally. Begin by observing the characteristics of a student's oral and silent reading in a variety of settings, such as in individual reading conferences, in reading groups, or with the entire class. You may find that commercial checklists of reading skills are helpful to keep nearby as you observe a student's reading competencies and weaknesses. Word identification lists that you buy or make yourself also can help you to informally learn more about a student's strengths and weakensses in some skill area.

Involving Students

It is helpful for a student to be involved in the diagnosis and correction of his or her own reading competencies and weakensses. Let a student choose a book and then "try it on for size." Ask the student to select a passage of about 100 words near the middle of a chosen book and try to read it silently. If the student finds more than two or three unknown words in the passage, the reading material probably is too difficult unless the student has an intense interest in it.

Students at the middle or upper grades can be quite competent in analyzing their own reading strengths and weaknesses. Such students can tell you which types of word identification techniques seem especially useful and which types are of no use to them. As much as possible, students should participate in planning their own prescriptive reading program and in keeping progress records.

In Summary

It is difficult to teach reading in a diagnostic-prescriptive manner in a complex contemporary classroom. You can make a very good beginning, however, if you encourage students to read on their own instructional and independent reading levels and if you present and reinforce only those important reading skills in which one or several of your students lack competency. The use of these two principles might improve the quality of reading instruction in our classrooms significantly.

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Membership Committee Reports

The present membership policy entitles members to materials published during the year their membership is in effect. Membership begins when the application is received and processed by the committee. Because of this, the Journal's production deadlines are important to persons who join for the first time or rejoin after allowing their membership to lapse.

A limited budget allows the printing of enough Journals for those who are paid up at the time the issue goes to press. What this means for you is that if your dues are received or processed after the Journal goes to press, your subscription will begin with the following issue. For example, The production deadline for the Fall issue is September 1. If your dues are received after that date, you will not receive the October issue for that year. You will receive four issues of the Journal--the first copy will arrive in late January and your subscription will continue through October of the next year.

Please note the list of production deadlines which appears on the inside back cover of each issue.

Pat Derocher
Deanie Wolbrink
Membership Chairpersons

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Book of Knowledge

by

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Once upon a time there was a library full of books. Because there was an energy shortage, the library was no longer in use. Every day a man, Mr. Basic Educator, took a walk in search of wood or coal for his fireplace. One day, the man was unsuccessful, and upon returning home passed the dark, still library. He thought one book would not be missed, and he could burn it and keep him and his wife warm.

As the man reached for one of the largest books, the book began to speak. "Please don't choose me. I am the Book of Knowledge and can solve all of your educational problems."

The man was shocked and gently placed the book back on the shelf. When he returned home he told his wife Mrs. Progressive Educator the unusual story of his adventure. She said, "Oh you foolish man, why didn't you ask him to change our educational system? Go back tomorrow and ask him to put more subjects in the curriculum."

Mr. Educator was satisfied with the current educational system. The basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic were being drilled with some success.

He couldn't understand why his wife was so insistent on changing the curriculum. She was an outspoken woman and he wanted to keep peace in the house, so he went back to the library to ask the favor. What could it hurt?

"Book of Knowledge, my wife requests a favor," said Mr. Basic Educator.

"What does she want from me?" asked the Book of Knowledge.

"She asks that you add more subjects to the Educational Curriculum."

"Go home, it has been done. The subjects of ecology, and sex education have been added," said the Book of Knowledge.

The man went home and found the new subjects had been added to the basic curriculum. The woman was happy, but only for a short time. She turned to her husband and said, "Go back to the Book and ask for individualization."

So the man patiently walked back to the library and said, "Book of Knowledge, my wife requests a favor."

"What does she want from me?" asked the Book of Knowledge.

"She asks that you add individualization to our educational system," said Mr. Basic Educator quietly.

"Go home, it has been done. Individualization has been added," replied the Book.

The man went home and noticed his wife was happy, but only for a short time. One day she said, "Go back to the Book. Tell him I feel accountability should be added to what we already have in education."

The man walked back to the library and said, "Book of Knowledge, my wife requests a favor."

"What does she want from me this time" said the Book of Knowledge angrily.

"She asks for accountability," said Mr. Basic Educator with downcast eyes.

"Go home, it has been done. You now have structured accountability complete with detailed behavioral objectives and state reports to be filed in triplicate. You tell your wife I am tiring of all of her wishes. She is forever changing her mind and unhappy about the state of education. Do not come back to me again!" shouted the Book of Knowledge.

Mr. Basic Educator quickly ran out of the library and returned home. His wife was happy for a short time and said to her husband, "Go back to the Book. I request another favor."

"No" said her meek husband. "The Book told me not to return. He is becoming very unhappy with all of the changes in the educational system. We still have children that are unable to read and write as we always have. Your requests have not changed that."

"Go!" shouted the angered wife.

The husband slowly walked to the library, trying to think of a manner in which to approach the Book of Knowledge without upsetting it. As he approached the library, he had not thought of a clever way to ask for the new demand of his wife.

In a shaky and cracky high pitched voice the husband said, "Book of Knowledge, my wife requests a favor."

"No!" bellowed the Book. She has asked too much of me already. Because she cannot make up her mind, I will make it up for her. Go back to your house. I have returned our educational system to the way it was. Educators will stress reading, writing and arithmetic."

When Mr. Basic Educator arrived home his wife asked, "What happened to all of my beautiful innovations?"

Her husband replied, "You asked for too much. We have returned to the basics."

Selecting A Reading Approach for the Mainstreamed Child

by

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Language Arts
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A considerable amount of attention is being given to the return and maintenance of the educable mentally retarded in the regular classroom. Mainstreaming programs which focus on the integration of regular and special education students are developing in school systems across the country. The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL. 94-142) in 1975 mandated that all educators become more involved in programming and adapting methods and materials to meet the needs of these students. This legislation prescribes only the general framework of instructional programming within the least restrictive environment, and does not specify either curriculum or methodology. However, it does have an impact on both of these areas since adjustments in instructional strategies will have to be made in order to successfully mainstream the educable mentally retarded. This fact will become increasingly apparent in the days ahead as teachers seek answers to many disturbing questions regarding differences among student learners.

READING AND THE EMR CHILD

Many regular classroom teachers will now be responsible for teaching mainstreamed educable mentally retarded children in their classes to read. Children who are unable to acquire proficiency in reading skills are often the same children who demonstrate learning difficulties in other academic areas.

The term educable mentally retarded (EMR) refers to children who during their school years experience general learning problems due to lower intellectual ability level (below IQ 70) and inadequate social adjustment.

The basic objectives in a reading program for EMR children are the same as for intellectually normal students. The difference occurs in the degree to which they are emphasized. Specifically the objectives are:

1. To develop a desire to read for information and pleasure.
2. To develop a basic sight vocabulary with emphasis on the child's existing language skills.
3. To develop skills in word analysis for independent reading.

For the EMR child objectives #1 and #2 are the most significant. Children must be motivated by a willingness to read throughout the learning experience in order to overcome the many intermittent frustrations they will most likely encounter, and the development of a functional sight vocabulary is important for children to gain independence as they grow older. Each of the first two objectives is essential for the child's growth and continuance in the reading program. Objective #3 is the one which is the most difficult to obtain. Most EMR children will achieve between a third and a sixth grade proficiency level in reading by the conclusion of their formal schooling. This means that with proper instruction the majority will function as literate adults able to adjust to contemporary demands.

Reading instruction is often beyond the reach of EMR children who have been mainstreamed into a regular class because the program is structured for groups of students without regard to specific learning problems. In order to successfully teach EMR children to read, it is imperative that the classroom teacher have an understanding of some general learning characteristics displayed by such children and their implications for the teaching of reading. By tailoring the reading program to the EMR child's individual needs the teacher can provide a suitable approach to help the child overcome learning difficulties.

LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMR CHILD

The following learning characteristics are commonly associated with EMR students, however the reader is cautioned that not all these traits are exhibited by every child, and even within children they vary in intensity.

1. The EMR child learns best from concrete materials which are meaningful to the child and the environment. Sight words and reading stories should pertain to experiences the child can relate to and which have relevance for daily life.

2. Learning is related to the child's mental age (MA), while motivation is often related to chronological age (CA). Materials selected for reading should be of high interest to the child but with a controlled vocabulary.

3. EMR children approach many learning situations expecting to fail. Activities should be developed to provide successful reading experiences in order to eliminate the child's negative expectancies.

4. Poor incidental learning skills mean the child will not acquire a reading skill or concept without direct instruction. This places the responsibility for learning on the adequacy of the teaching plans. Make sure that reading skills are taught sequentially, allowing the child to progress from a learned skill to a more complex one.

5. Small segments of material are remembered best. Word lists should be short and stories and other experiences should be divided into manageable units. This allows the child to experience closure with a feeling of success.

6. Poor retention of reading skills and sight words can be alleviated by periodic review beyond the initial criterion learning. Reading practice should be distributed throughout the school day and not concentrated within a specified time block.

7. An inability to transfer concepts and knowledge results in skills being learned in isolation. Help the child generalize a concept's application

by providing a variety of reading experiences.

8. Being easily distractible the child won't always be able to focus upon relevant word stimuli. Attention needs to be trained. Emphasize similarities and differences among words and teach through a variety of modal experiences.

The EMR child learns at an early age the meaning of words and the power they provide. Such children hear words spoken in relation to the objects and activities around them and are eager to expand their world. Unfortunately, the stumbling blocks presented by learning difficulties can have a cumulative effect which will discourage involvement in the reading program. The effective reading teacher will be able to pinpoint specific learning problems and to identify the corresponding teaching implications.

ANALYZING READING PROGRAMS

Once the EMR child's learning characteristics are understood, the teacher can appropriately adjust the reading methods and materials employed. Beyond an understanding of the child's needs, the teacher must be aware of the philosophy and general approach of the reading program used in the classroom. As with normal youngsters there is no one reading method or program that works best for the mainstreamed child.

The reading process may be insensible to the EMR child simply because the program structure does not meet learning needs. Elements of the philosophical and/or instructional framework of the reading program may not be suited to the manner by which the child acquires and retains information. Without an appropriate match between instructional strategies and learning strategies a program is destined to encounter failure. Keeping in mind the specific learning characteristics of EMR students it is possible to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of specific reading approaches. The majority of reading programs fall within the following classifications: a basal approach, linguistic approach, programmed instruction approach, phonics approach, alphabetic approach, and language experience approach. Each of the six reading approaches has had an impact on public school programs, some being more successful than others. The analysis to follow should provide the reader with insight into the reasons for program effectiveness or ineffectiveness when considered in

light of a broader range of the student population which includes the EMR group.

The listed advantages and disadvantages of the various reading approaches are applicable to many children other than the educable mentally retarded. Children of average intellectual ability often experience difficulties with specific approaches used in their classroom reading program. A two-step analysis, such as the one provided in this article, examining the learner's specific difficulties and needs and then delineating the structural advantages and disadvantages of the program in relation to these needs may suggest avenues of remediation for regular as well as special students.

Programmed Instruction

Advantages for EMR Children

1. The child is encouraged to proceed at his/her own pace with reinforcement provided at each learning step.
2. Continuous recording of the child's errors provides a learning profile for instructional planning.
3. Learning is designed for the individual child rather than for a group.
4. Instruction is provided in short units made up of many small segments.

Disadvantages for EMR Children

1. Most EMR children are not self-directed learners and therefore cannot initiate and pace their learning.
2. Many EMR children lose their initial high motivation and become distracted.
3. The repetitive material often becomes boring and loses the child's attention.
4. Short frames do not allow the EMR child to experience the flow of written language.
5. It is difficult to program advanced comprehension skills within the short frame structure.
6. The instructional frames do not lend themselves to interesting stories. The child does not develop a desire for reading.

Alphabet

Advantages for EMR Children

1. Simplifies reading by making a direct sound-symbol association.
2. Programmed for success which becomes both the reinforcer and the motivator.
3. There are no exceptions to the rule. Therefore children may learn to read more rapidly than by other approaches.

Disadvantages for EMR Children

1. The child must make the transition from the alphabet approach (e.g., ITA) to the traditional orthography. This is often very difficult for the EMR child to do because of an inability to generalize.
2. The child sees the traditional alphabet outside of school and can become confused.
3. The program does not induce transfer from reading instruction to other academic areas.

Phonics

Advantages for EMR Children

1. Emphasis upon word recognition leads to independent reading.
2. Increases interest in reading as the child learns to figure out new words.
3. Helps the child to associate sounds and printed letters representing them.

Disadvantages for EMR Children

1. Isolation of speech sounds is unratural. EMR children often cannot blend the sounds to form complete words.
2. Child learns to read word-by-word. The EMR child becomes frustrated by new sounds and their blending.
3. Emphasis on word recognition is often at the expense of comprehension.
4. There are many exceptions to every rule. The EMR child may become confused, unable to differentiate the rule from the exception.

Basal

Advantages for the EMR Children

1. A sequentially ordered, comprehensive approach from early readiness to advanced reading levels.
2. Skills are divided into small units for systematic teaching.
3. Establishes a basic vocabulary repreated throughout the sequence.
4. Provides diagnostic tools for pinpointing strengths and weakensses.
5. Gives the individual teacher guidance in establishing the reading program focus.
6. Many basals emphasize a sight word learning method.

Disadvantages for the EMR Children

1. Organizes teaching reading for a group of children rather than for individual needs.
2. Limited vocabulary limits reading to only one basal series--de-emphasizes reading in content areas.
3. Stories and illustrations are often geared to the middle class child. A majority of EMR children do not fit that description.
4. The material is often too difficult for the children at the lower end of the learning continuum. Using books designed for younger students reduces motivation.
5. Workbooks for skill development result in isolated learning. The EMR student is often unable to make a transfer from skill practice to the reading text.

Linguistic

Advantages for EMR Children

1. Stresses the transition from spoken to written language by showing the child the relationship between phonemes and graphemes.
2. Arranges learning from familiar, phonemically regular words to ones of irregular spelling. This encourages recognition of consistent visual patterns.

3. Child learns to spell and read the word as a whole unit.
4. Creates an awareness of sentence structure so child learns that words are arranged to form sentences.
5. Teaches reading by association with the child's natural language facility.

Disadvantages for EMR Children

1. Most teachers are not skilled enough in linguistics to develop the necessary program for individual learners.
2. Vocabulary is too controlled and does not approximate the child's speaking skills so that the EMR child has difficulty relating to it.
3. Creates word reading, losing the flow of the sentence.
4. Use of nonsense words for pattern practice is irrelevant and reduces comprehension training.
5. Emphasizes auditory memory skills which many EMR children are deficient in.

Language Experience

Advantages for EMR Children

1. Employs the child's current oral language abilities as the focus of the reading program.
2. Combines speaking, listening and writing skills into the reading program.
3. Utilizes direct experiences so the child can relate to the written language form.
4. Adaptable to individual or small groups according to learner and teaching needs.
5. Flexible in style as it may involve narratives, descriptions, and/or recordings of event sequences. This allows an expansion of the child's reading style.

Disadvantages for EMR Children

1. Requires a prolonged attention span which is difficult for many EMR children.
2. May be limited to the child's speaking vocabulary and may not provide a structured enough approach to vocabulary development.

3. The LEA may not have enough consistency in vocabulary or control over syntax to teach and reinforce sequential skills for the EMR child.

4. Relies heavily upon the child's own experiences and ability to relate them.

The effectiveness of any reading program depends upon the teacher's ability to select, use and adjust the approach to the needs of the students. The important ingredients for success in selecting a reading program for mainstreamed EMR children are: 1) awareness of the child's learning needs, 2) fundamental understanding of the reading process and the program's objectives, and 3) a willingness to work through each difficulty by adjusting the instructional program to appropriately match with the individual learner.

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RESEARCH UPDATE:

Assessing Readers' Strategies Through Miscues

by

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The word "diagnosis" has some unfortunate connotations for reading teachers. Guthrie (1978) has pointed out that we live (or die) by our metaphors, and that the metaphor that reading teachers have adopted of reading "disability", "diagnosis" and "remediation" implies a medical model. The student is perceived as a patient who is disabled and in need of a cure. If teachers could, instead, look at their students in the same way as they view themselves as golfers, it might be possible to talk about improving the students' game rather than remediating their disabilities.

A model for reading that incorporates this point of view has been provided by Goodman (1977) in his research on miscues. Goodman defines reading as a meaning seeking process. He uses the word miscue instead of error to describe oral reading deviations from the printed text. Miscues include hesitations, omissions, graphically similar substitutions (through for though), semantically acceptable substitutions (pony for horse), syntactically acceptable substitutions (playing for praying), and corrections. Not all miscues are equal, nor are they necessarily bad. They are often indications of the reader's use of semantic, syntactic, and graphic clues to gain meaning, and thus show strengths. The teacher needs to know how to sort out those miscues that alter the meaning and therefore need to be corrected from those which show the reader's strengths and should be encouraged. Encourage a miscue? Well, not exactly. But it is possible to discover a reading strategy

that leads to a miscue and encourage the use of that strategy. "I see you read 'pony' for 'horse' here. That shows you were concentrating on the meaning!"

Since the original work by the Goodmans (Goodman 1967, Y. Goodman and Burke 1972) a number of research studies have been conducted which looked at the miscues made by readers. It has now become possible to look at this body of research and draw some conclusions about the reading process in general which should be useful in helping classroom teachers recognize strengths and weaknesses in students' oral reading performance and provide appropriate instruction.

Weber (1970) examined the influence of context on oral reading performance. She describes her research in this way: "To demonstrate that early readers use context to facilitate their identification of words in a passage would only confirm the experience of anyone who has observed a child learning to read." In her study Weber considered the acceptability of oral miscues to their preceding grammatical context, the graphic similarity of the miscue to the written word, and the effects of grammaticality on readers' correction. Her conclusions were that the readers' miscues were about 90% grammatical, that their ungrammatical miscues tended to be graphically similar, and that the readers corrected more ungrammatical miscues than grammatical ones. She found there were differences between good and poor readers, but they tended to be differences in number of miscues rather than type.

This leads to the question of whether there are, in fact, any differences among good and poor readers' miscues, except in number. Malmquist (1960) stated, "Every type of error is found among poor, medium, and good readers." Coomber (1972) set out to prove that good readers' substitution miscues would more closely match the graphic stimuli than poor readers. This hypothesis was only partially accepted. Good and poor readers' miscues tended to match the printed word in initial and final position on short words, their miscues showed greater graphic similarity as the material became more difficult, their miscues were syntactically appropriate, and both groups tended to read by phrases.

The most significant conclusion of this study relates to the way children learn to read. Regardless

of proficiency, when a reader is reading easy material he or she tends to make miscues on short function words that do not significantly change the meaning or syntax, and do not graphically resemble the written word. As the material becomes more difficult the reader tends to lose the sentence sense, hesitating, making more miscues on content words, and fewer miscues on familiar function words. The miscues increase in graphic similarity as the reader tries to fall back on word attack skills when context clues fail. All readers tend to read in phrases, and make more miscues at the beginning of phrases, implying heavy use of contextual and syntactical cues.

Coomber's conclusions are similar to those of Biemiller (1970), who found that first graders tend to make more miscues which are graphically similar when they begin to pay attention to the words in the text. He noticed that students go through a phase in first grade when they stop and say nothing if they cannot read a word. Children enter this phase at different points, but, in general, those who enter it earliest tend to be the better readers. Gibson and Levin (1975) summarize Biemiller's model in this way: "The beginning reader starts with the strategy that any word that yields a sensible sentence can be said; then he gets the idea that what he says must have some relationship to the text, but he is unable to decode the text so he keeps silent; finally, with increased decoding skills he reads a word that has some relation to the graphic display. Errors at this point require the child to say a word that both makes sense in the context of the sentence and resembles the graphic constraints of the printed word."

Wixson (1979) reviewed the entire body of miscue research and came up with the following conclusions:

1. Most readers produce more miscues which are semantically and syntactically acceptable (home for house) than miscues which are graphically similar (horse for house).
2. Beginning readers' miscues include a large number of substitutions (pony for horse) and no response omissions.
3. As readers mature they produce fewer omissions and more graphically similar substitutions, even if they are not words (howze for house).

4. Poor readers continue to produce more graphically similar miscues, and are less likely to correct themselves than good readers.

5. As readers improve they produce more semantically and syntactically acceptable miscues, they tend to omit words that are unnecessary for meaning, and they correct themselves more often.

In addition, Wixson found that instructional methods affect the types of miscues. Norton (1977), for example, found that students taught by a synthetic phonic approach produced miscues that were graphically similar but semantically unacceptable, and they made few corrections. Students taught by an analytic meaning-getting approach were more likely to produce semantically acceptable miscues and correct their mistakes.

Smith (1978) offers an explanation of the reading process which could help to explain the findings of miscue research: "So many necessary things are difficult for the beginning reader at the outset that will be easier when his reading skills develop. For example, the mere fact that a child cannot read very fast puts a heavy burden on memory and attentional systems that are both inexperienced and overloaded with all kinds of instructions and rules. By the time the novice has built up enough speed many of the rules have become unnecessary and automatic."

What does all of this mean to the classroom teacher? First, it means that the teacher can expect students to produce miscues. Instead of being viewed as errors to be expunged, they can be seen as windows on the reading strategies employed by students. Second, it means that students can be expected to go through a developmental process in learning how to read, and that the process will undoubtedly be affected by the type of instruction given. The study of students' miscues will help the teacher to discover where the students are in their development, and what effects their instruction is having. Finally, it means that some miscues should be accepted as indicators of the readers' strengths while others should be viewed as signs of weaknesses in need of correction.

The golfer is constantly trying to improve his or her game. The consistent feedback that the golfer gets through a well placed shot or a good putt is used by the golfer to improve a bad swing or a short putt. Continual practice, occasional instruction, and the internal correction of mistakes helps the golfer improve. The reader can improve in the same way.

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Don't worry! Another W.S.R.A. Spring Conference registration form is included in the center of this issue.

Administering Reading Programs: RELEVANT RESEARCH

by

Mildred Hoffmann
Reading Instructional Resource Specialist
Milwaukee Public Schools

Administrators of reading programs are frequently faced with the task of making decisions that require a synthesis of relevant research culminating in a position statement of practical application. While it is most desirable to read original research reports, often time and task restrictions make this impossible. An alternative to reading original research would be to read the synthesis products available. Even though reviews of literature sometimes include implications for practice, more frequently the criticism is raised that many of these reviews and other synthesis products do not relate directly to the immediate concerns of classroom teachers and school administrators. By starting with questions from practitioners, the authors of Research Within Reach appear to have overcome these criticisms. They identified current reading concerns through interviews with five classroom teachers in five different locations in the country; two curriculum specialists with responsibilities for assisting elementary teachers in all subject areas; an ESEA Title I curriculum supervisor of a rural school district; a curriculum director from a large city district with responsibility for directing the planning and implementation of the district's total curriculum at all grade levels; an ESEA Title I program director of a large city school district; three elementary principals in three different locations in the country; and the superintendent of a large city school system.

The problems and questions identified were presented to a consultant panel of prominent researchers nominated by their peers. The members of the panel were:

John Guthrie, Director of Research for the International Reading Association
S. Jay Samuels, Center for Research in Human Learning, University of Minnesota
Cleona Shortridge, Reading Specialist, St Louis Public Schools
Harry Singer, School of Education, University of California, Riverside
Phyllis Weaver, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

This panel met with the authors to identify questions most amenable to research-guided responses. The consultant panel, along with the following educators reviewed the response-manuscript and offered criticisms and suggestions:

Marilyn Adams, Bolt, Beranek, and Newman, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Rebecca Barr, University of Chicago
Barbara Bateman, University of Oregon, Eugene
Isabel Beck, University of Pittsburgh and Learning Research and Development Center, Pittsburgh, PA
Robert Calfee, Stanford University
Courtney Cazden, Harvard University
Jeanne Chall, Harvard University
Larry Frase, Bell Labs, Piscataway, New Jersey
John Fredericksen, Bolt, Beranek, and Newman
Ed Glaser, Human Interaction Research Institute, Los Angeles, California
Kenneth Goodman, University of Arizona, Tucson
J.R. Jenkins, University of Washington, Seattle
Shirley Lewis, Stanford, California
Isabelle Liberman, University of Connecticut, Storrs
Walter MacGinitie, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York
Charles Perfetti, Learning Research and Development Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Helen Popp, Harvard University
Roger Shuy, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia
Nancy Stein, University of Illinois, Urbana
Richard Venezky, University of Delaware, Newark
Joanna Williams, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York

The reviewer comments were considered in the revision of the manuscript by the authors and the consultant panel. This complicated, extensive review process did not always result in consenus, "but the authors feel comfortable that the answers given

are the best answers that research and educational practice can currently give" (page XIV). Research Within Reach reflects research conclusions where it was possible to draw conclusions. Where the discussions and recommendations are based on personal opinion, experience and common sense, they have so indicated.

Research Within Reach is readable and understandable. It avoids research jargon and presents clear, concise responses to questions such as:

> Does black dialect speech interfere with learning to read? If it does, what can my teachers do to reduce the interference?
>
> What procedures are suggested for improving reading comprehension?
>
> Is reading really just a lot of separate skills that are performed rapidly, or is it more like a single process that cannot be separated into component skills?
>
> Is there guidance for how to integrate subskills so that our students become fluent readers? Are there any suggestions for the proper sequencing of the subskills in reading?
>
> Are there specific language skills that we ought to emphasize--skills that are so critical that children would have great difficulty learning to read without them? If so, what activities foster the development of these skills?
>
> How useful for teaching black children to read are materials written in standard Black English?

At the end of each response suggested follow-up readings are provided. These readings represent a variety of viewpoints and format; some are technical, some are reviews of literature, some are opinion, some are research reports, etc. The references thought to be of special interest to teachers are designated with an asterisk.

Research Within Reach: A Research - Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators by Phyllis Weaver with Fredi Shonkoff should help teachers and administrators utilize relevant research. The publication was published by CEMREL Research and

Development Interpretation Service and is being distributed by the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware, 19711. ($4.50)

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D. P. I. Reading Newsline

by

Ellen M. Ryan
Reading Supervisor
Wisconsin Right to Read Effort

As we enter the decade of the 1980's one wonders about the state of education and what direction educational programming and funding may go. Will it be Back to Basics or Forward with the Fundamentals?

To a large extent, the future direction of education depends on the image created by us, as educators. In perusing the newstands, articles can always be found indicting educators and reporting how students aren't achieving. But what are the facts and what can we do about it? According to Dr. Roger Farr, President of the International Reading Association, illiteracy is not a problem. America is a nation of readers and students are achieving and doing better than ever before.

If what Dr. Farr says is true and as the state reading supervisor, I strongly concur, why is education no longer in the public favor? Why are so many articles being written to the contrary? One reason is that although enrollments are declining, educational expenses are increasing. The largest percentage of every local tax dollar goes into the school district's budget. The Wisconsin state average is 69%. Considering this, it is no wonder that community members are questioning the costs and the quality of education. Obviously, the taxpayer wants the best education possible for the least amount of money expended.

To improve the situation, Dr. Barbara Thompson, Wisconsin State Superintendent of Schools, has suggested that each of us make a sustained effort "to create a better public image for educators by telling our many publics about the positive things that are taking place in school buildings throughout Wisconsin." (WDPI Newsletter, January 1980).

If as educators we are doing a good job, then as educators perhaps we need to educate the public to the facts. People need to know and be told the successes education is achieving. We need to look for good press by sending articles to the local paper. In addition, you can share your ideas, activities and accomplishments with us at the Department, so we can spread the good news. As you have heard me say many times before, the future of education is not in the hands of fate, but in ours. As educators, we need to assume more responsibility for communicating our educational successes and those of the school with the community and the rest of the state.

Recognizing the need to promote education, the WSRA has a bumper sticker that shares a beautiful message: IF YOU CAN READ THIS--THANK A TEACHER. It's a simple statement, but a powerful message. It is unfortunate the public does not recognize the contributions American education has made. In order to continue to make significant contributions, educators need the public's support. We need to stand up and be counted. In addition, each of us must resolve to actively work toward a better public image for education. Good news articles can be submitted to me at the Reading Section, Department of Public Instruction, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702.

P. S.

For personal and professional growth and for a better understanding of the problems of illiteracy throughout the world, why not consider attending the 1980 World Reading Congress in Manila? About 30 Wisconsin Educators attended the last congress in Hamburg, Germany and felt the educational experience was tremendous. Should you be interested, there are two Wisconsin groups you might want to consider.

For additional information, contact either:

Vivian Brusius
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Oshkosh, WI 54901
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Eau Claire, WI 54701
715-835-9087

Resources for Teachers

by

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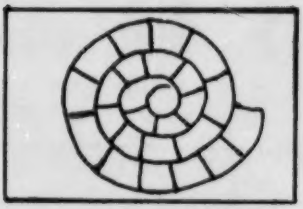
Reading Teacher
Milwaukee Public Schools

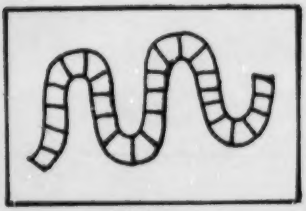
Teachers of reading use many methods to identify a student's reading achievements and determine those areas in which a student needs additional instruction and reinforcement. To accomplish this diagnosis, a wide range of materials may be used including: formal paper and pencil tests, short criterion referenced tests, and informal observations through manipulative materials.

A multi-purpose game can be designed to reinforce various skills and concepts for any age level. However, it is also an excellent device to informally diagnose a student's progress. A multi-purpose gameboard is one in which the skill or concept to be taught is not stated directly on the board itself but is indicated on the accessory cards, spinners, or dice. Therefore, any specific skill or content can be programmed into an activity using a multi-purpose gameboard. This gives the teacher a wide variety of alternatives to use for informal diagnosis.

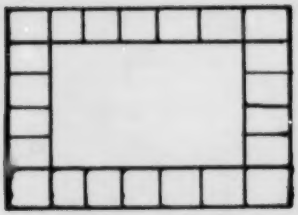
To begin, select a board that will appeal to the students. In the illustrated basic formats that follow, direction of movement is determined by the specific layout and theme.



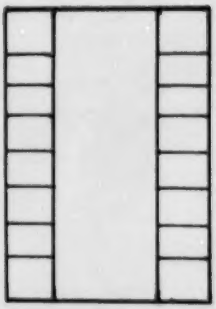
SPIRAL



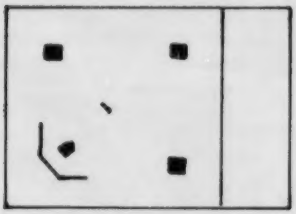
OPEN-ENDED PATH



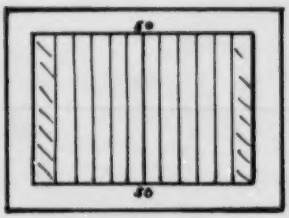
CLOSED PATH



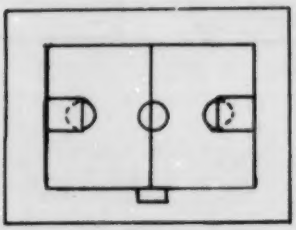
TWO SEPARATE PATHS



BASEBALL

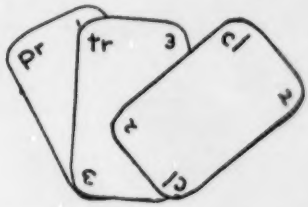


FOOTBALL

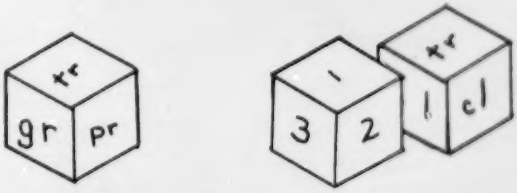


BASKETBALL

To use these boards, the teacher develops cards, dice, and spinners which will reinforce and diagnose the items sought. For example, the teacher has selected a multi-purpose gameboard and has developed an activity in which the student is to give a word for the blend presented. This type of activity could be presented to students using the following options:



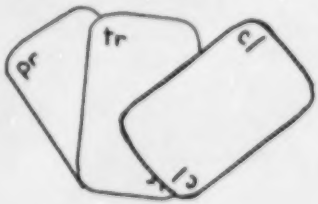
A. Multi-purpose gameboard using cards to reinforce concepts and determine moves. More than one set of cards can be used at a particular time if a form of matching two items is required to carry out a needed observation. Cards and gameboards also lend themselves to forms of concentration.



B. Multi-purpose gameboard using a die or dice to incorporate skill being reinforced.

C. Multi-purpose gameboard using a spinner to incorporate skill being reinforced.

D. Multi-purpose gameboard using a die to determine movement and cards to incorporate skill being reinforced.



E. Multi-purpose gameboard using a spinner to determine movement and cards to incorporate skill being reinforced.

Make some of your diagnosis of a student's needs in a form that will be enjoyable for the student and productive for you.

Much Success!

PARENTS' SPOT:

A Diagnostic Primer for Parents

by

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"Parents as Partners" has become a frequent theme heralded at educational conferences and promoted in the literature. Can parents become diagnostic partners in the child's reading program? Parental involvement can be of value to the child and school if parents become aware of teacher's tasks and duties as diagnostic decision-makers. Parental knowledge will increase the productivity of scheduled parent-teacher conferences and other informal correspondence. An informed parent will be better able to ask the "right questions" and receive information needed to understand such issues as placement within reading levels, anticipated rate of growth, and skill strengths and weaknesses. A positive outgrowth can result in the sharing of ideas for home involvement activities based on a child's identified needs. Improved parent-teacher communications are of utmost value.

What do parents need to know about the school's diagnostic responsibilities in a reading program? Basically, a well-informed parent should be aware of 1) what teachers examine in reading diagnoses; 2) sources of assessment available to teachers; and 3) how diagnostic information forms the basis of instructional decision making. The following paragraphs have been designed to supply parents with information on these three topics.

Teachers must be familiar with each child's skills in word recognition, understanding of words

and ideas, and attitudes/interests in reading. Pre-service and in-service training provides teachers with materials, methods and techniques necessary to teach, assess and re-teach, if necessary, vital areas of the reading curriculum.

Word Recognition

Sight Vocabulary: Children need to develop skill at recognizing words rapidly. Knowing how to read an increasing number of words at sight frees the child to read with ease and concentrate on what a sentence or story means. Teachers follow a plan which insures exposure to words the child will meet in school books and pleasure reading. Since sight word mastery is essential to progress in reading, the teacher will use a variety of diagnostic techniques to check on a child's progress.

One quick way to measure sight word retention is to use a group test. A popular type of test asks the child to choose and circle a word read aloud by the teacher:

1.	red	rag	read	rode
2.	boat	bone	ball	bat
3.	here	her	he	home

Authors of instructional reading materials often include tests of this type to measure vocabulary retention at intervals throughout the program. In addition, schools may purchase standardized tests which include vocabulary sub-tests.

Sight word knowledge can be checked informally as the classroom teacher:

1. listens to a child read a select word list, special sentences, or a story from the reading textbook
2. asks the child to read words printed on flash cards
3. plays teacher-made or commercial word games
4. checks workbook pages and other supplementary activities.

Many of these activities involve one child at a time. The teacher will keep a record of words a child misses and will make plans to re-teach and review missed words.

Word Analysis Skills: Children need to have a storehouse of words they can read at sight but they also must know how to figure out a word not immediately recognized. "Word Analysis Skills" teach a child to a) look at the shape or configuration of a word; b) note how a word is used in the context of a sentence; c) observe the letter-sound groupings (phonics); d) locate root words along with attached prefixes or suffixes; and, e) use the dictionary to solve difficult word problems. There are innumerable sub-skills within each of the five areas mentioned above. Because all children have individual learning abilities, teachers introduce the skills at a variety of rates and plan frequent check-ups to determine which children have mastered a skill and which need additional instruction.

There are several group diagnostic tests teachers can use to determine how well word analysis skills have been learned. However, the true test of a child's ability in word analysis skills comes from "real" reading situations. Skill mastery is complete when the child is able to rapidly and accurately decode unknown words using the skills that have been practiced in isolation. The best assessment technique teachers can use is to record errors that occur when a child reads orally. Light pencil marks in the teacher's book record specific errors made during oral reading. An analysis of these errors by type tells a great deal about actual skill proficiency.

Other methods of evaluation might include:

1. locating errors on workbook pages or worksheets assigned in class;
2. special informal, teacher-made tests designed to check an individual skill area;
3. games which require attention to specific word skills.

Again, the teacher will keep a record of each child's progress and will reteach and re-evaluate skills that have not been mastered.

Understanding Words and Ideas

Reading is much more than pronouncing words correctly. A successful reader understands or comprehends what an author of a passage or story meant to communicate. Children's reading lessons include

opportunities to read and react to units of print that carry meaning--sentences, paragraphs, stories and books. The classroom teacher has several means of measuring how well children comprehend what they read.

Formal group or individual tests can be used periodically to measure how well children understand what they read. In these tests, children read sentences or paragraphs silently or orally and then answer a prescribed set of questions. Results obtained from the numerous standardized tests give teachers just a rough estimate of children's reading comprehension skills.

Many teachers rely on informal means of measuring reading comprehension. Informal measures provide for frequent data gathering as the child reads and responds to actual materials used in the instructional program. What are some of the commonly used informal techniques?

1. Question-answer technique: Questions based on a sentence, paragraph, page or story selected from the reading textbook or library book are used to probe a child's reading comprehension. Teachers ask a variety of questions that may ask the child to clarify a word meaning, infer ideas from what has been read, recall events or evaluate ideas presented in print.
2. Retelling technique: A child is asked to retell a story or portion of a story from memory.
3. Paper and pencil techniques: The child completes a written assignment (workbook, worksheet, creative writing project, etc.) that requires an understanding of the assigned reading.

Records are kept of the child's comprehension in actual reading situations; these form the best input for teacher decision-making. If problems appear, additional help, review and reinforcement can be offered.

Attitudes and Interest in Reading

A good reading program will make every effort to teach children in ways that promote a positive attitude toward reading. It does little good to equip children with reading skills if those skills are not used to promote a better quality of life for the child. The acquisition of reading skills will help the child learn in academic and personal situations; however, our ultimate goal is to teach children to value reading as a means of providing pleasureable, life-fulfilling experiences.

As part of a complete assessment of a child's success in reading, teachers examine the child's attitude and interest in reading. The major question asked is, "Does the child like to read?". Informal interviews with individual children provide some information on the attitude/interest issue. In addition, a number of checklists have been made available to teachers. Some of the checklists ask children to respond to a series of leading questions concerning their reading habits and preferences. Other inventories require children to complete open-ended sentences which reveal personal feelings about reading, special topics of interest, etc. An examination of a child's responses provide the teacher with insights on attitude/interests that are useful in guiding future reading growth.

Several very informal observations will provide much information to the observer. Children tell us a great deal about their feelings toward reading by the frequency of selecting books in lieu of other recreational activities, asking to spend time at the library, or simply by discussing incidents from a favorite book.

Final Comments

Preceding paragraphs have provided a brief outline of what a teacher wants to know about a child's reading. Informal and formal tools used by the teacher provide information on how well a child reads words, understands and reacts to what is read, and finally, how a child feels about reading. Each time a child reads in a group or responds to planned follow-up activities, the teacher gains information relating to these three essential areas. Information gathered becomes the input for lesson plans designed to promote the child's reading growth. Armed with

valuable diagnostic reading information, the teacher knows which level textbook is best for a particular child and which skills within that level have been mastered or need further work. In addition, the teacher will be able to provide recreational reading materials and related activities for enrichment at the appropriate level of difficulty. Potential for reading growth is greatest when we have established a close match between a child's abilities and the difficulty level of the book or other written materials. It is only through careful diagnosis and evaluation that a teacher can make good decisions which insure that close matches occur.

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